healthwatch Medway

## A Spotlight Report

# How people feel about living in Medway

A spotlight report focusing on **Gillingham**.

**March 2024**

## Background

Our health and wellbeing can be affected by things that we experience in everyday life.

There is increasing interest in these wider determinants of health and Healthwatch Medway wanted to understand what positively and negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of people in Medway.

Medway has a range of diverse settlements, from isolated rural villages and hamlets on the peninsula to densely populated urban towns.

**This report is part of a series of reports that will be posted monthly in 2024 with each covering a different area of Medway. As of March 2024, these reports together contain 100 responses. You can read our other reports here.**

In March 2024, we engaged with **32** residents living in **Gillingham**.

Healthwatch Medway will share this report with health and social care services to help build an understanding of how the areas where people live impact on them, and how we can work together with services to improve Medway residents' quality of life.

This report summarises what we have heard.

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## Headlines

**85%** of respondents that were **not involved** in community groups said that where they live **impacts on their health and wellbeing**.

**81%** of overall respondents said **where they live** has an **impact on their health and wellbeing**.

**79%** of respondents that **were involved** in community groups said that where they live **impacts on their health and wellbeing**.

**77%** of respondents **not involved** in community groups **like where they live**.

**63%** of overall respondents said that they **like the area** in which they live.

**53%** of respondents involved in community groups said that they **like the area** in which they live.

**44%** of respondents said that **the amenities** in the local area have a **positive impact** on them.

**41%** of respondents said the amount of **rubbish** and **lack of upkeep** of the area has a **negative impact** on them.

## Methodology

Using a semi-structured interview, we approached people face-to-face in local community areas and community groups.

Participants were selected by a randomised sample of who was out and about in their local area on the days we were out engaging.

## Participant Profile

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We spoke to 32 people, of these:

- 84% of people identified as White British.
- 6% identified as Indian.
- 6% identified as African.
- 3% identified as any other White background.

- 70% of respondents were over the age of 65.
- 16% were under 35.
- 14% were 35-64.
- 3% were under 25.

- 53% of people identified as female.

- 47% of people identified as male.

- 46% of people identified as disabled.
- 28% identified as having a physical disability.
- 6% identified as having a learning disability.
- 6% identified as neurodiverse.

- 16% of people identified as carers.

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# Factors that contribute to feeling positive about where you live

**32 people told us why they like where they live:**

**44%** of people mentioned the array of **local amenities** having a positive impact on how they feel about where they live.

**31%** mentioned that the **community** contributes to people liking where they live.

**28%** mentioned the **convenience** of living close to amenities and main roads is a factor in their levels of happiness about the area they live.

**25%** of Gillingham residents mentioned that the **green spaces** increase their level of satisfaction of where they live.

**19%** mentioned the importance of **familiarity** and **family ties** being one of the reasons why they like where they live.

**16%** mentioned the ability to **exercise** and **access to fresh air** having a positive impact on their opinion about where they live.

**6%** of people mentioned they like **nothing** about the area they live in.

**"Everything is within a short drive. It keeps me independent."**

**"It's got a good choice of shopping, Riverside and the Strand. We've got a dentist, a bus stop and an Aldi."**

**"I like the street I live on, but not past the end of the road."**

# Factors that contribute to feeling negative about where you live

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**32** people told us what they do not like about where they live:

**41%** of Gillingham residents mentioned that the amount of **rubbish** and **neglect of local areas** has a negative impact on liking where they live.

**34%** mentioned the negatives around the **urban decay**, specifically around Gillingham High Street.

**31%** mentioned the negative impact of the amount of **crime** in the local area.

**28%** mentioned that they were unhappy about the **community** in Gillingham.

**25%** mentioned the negatives of the lack of **safety** where they live.

**19%** mentioned negatives around issues with the **upkeep of roads**.

**19%** of Gillingham residents mentioned that they were unhappy about the **availability of local GPs**, and **not being able to get appointments**.

**16%** of people mentioned the **lack of community policing** as having a negative impact on levels of satisfaction about where they live.

**13%** mentioned issues around **public transport**, most notably the **cost** (3%) and the **accessibility** of public transport stations (3%).

**"[The high street is] a no-go area after dark."**

**"There's no sense of community."**

**"With all the stabbings, it's not safe."**

**"The area is now mainly full of fast food take-outs so it's become very limited to go grocery shopping."**

**"The high street is horrid. It is full of mess and so much graffiti everywhere that it has turned into an eye sore."**

# Involvement in community groups and activities

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We engaged with Gillingham residents in two main places - on **Gillingham high street**, and in **local community groups**.

Of the **19** respondents engaged with in **community groups**:

- **58%** identifed as **female**.
- **42%** identifed as **male**.
- **100%** identified as **heterosexual**.
- **42%** were between the ages of **65-74**.
- **90%** identified as **white British.**
- **10%** identified as **non-white**.
- **5%** identified as **Portuguese**.
- **5%** identified as **Indian**.
- **58%** identified as **disabled**.
- **21%** identified as **carers**.
- **53%** **like** where they live.
- **47%** **don't like** where they live.
- **79%** believe liking where you live and being involved in groups **has an impact** on your health and wellbeing.
- **16%** believe liking where you live and being involved in groups **does not have an impact** on your health and wellbeing.

## Community Groups Mentioned:

- St Augustine's
  - Ukulele Club
  - Art Club
  - Adult Education Group
  - Home Education Group
  - Gardening Group
- St Mark's Gospel
- Gillingham Street Angels
- Chatty Café
- Demelza Gardens
- Men In Sheds
- Local Carers Group
- Litter Picks
- Pilates
- Aqua-aerobics
- Twydall Club
- Walderslade Together
- Archery Club
- Bowls Group
- St Mary's Island Church

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Of the **13** respondents engaged with on the **high street**:

- **54%** identifed as **male**.
- **46%** identifed as **female**.
- **100%** identified as **heterosexual**.
- **31%** were between the ages of **25-34**.
- **77%** identified as **white British**.
- **23%** identified as **non-white**.
- **15%** identified as **African**.
- **8%** identified as **Indian**.
- **31%** identify as **disabled**.
- **8%** identified as **carers**.
- **77%** **like** where they live.
- **23%** **don't like** where they live.
- **100%** are **not involved** in community groups.
- **54%** **do not want** to get involved in community groups.
- **85%** believe liking where you live and being involved in groups **has an impact** on your health and wellbeing.
- **15%** believe liking where you live and being involved in groups **does not have an impact** on your health and wellbeing.

## Notable Differences between Engagement Avenues

- The majority of people engaged with on the high street fall under the 25-34 age range, whereas the residents engaged with in the community groups mostly fall into the 64-75 age group.
- 77% of the cohort engaged with on the high street like where they live. In the community groups this is a lower percentage, sitting at 53%.
- 58% of people engaged with in community groups identified as disabled, as opposed to 31% on the high street.
- 21% of people spoken to within community groups identified as carers. On the high street, 8% identified as carers.

# Benefits of being involved in community groups

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Out of the 19 people who said they are involved in community groups:

**79%** believe that being involved in a community group has an **impact on their health and wellbeing**.

**63%** mentioned that involvement in community groups has a **positive social impact**.

**42%** mentioned that involvement in community groups **benefits** their **physical health**.

**37%** mentioned that getting involved has a **positive** impact on their **mental health**.

**11%** of people mentioned the **positive** impact of **learning new skills** through being involved in community groups.

**11%** of people believe being part of a community group has a **positive impact on the community**.

**"I feel more confident in speaking to new people."**

**"If you don't turn up [to the group] it's nice to know that somebody will worry about you."**

**"I didn't want to go outside, but coming here has helped."**

**"Coming to this group has lifted my morale. If I didn't come to this group, I wouldn't survive."**

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# Barriers to joining community groups

We asked people whether they faced any barriers to joining community groups or getting involved with anything locally:

**28%** mentioned a **lack of local opportunities** as a barrier to accessing community groups.
**"Having less options around to find local community centres and activities can be a massive burden."**

**25%** said that there was **nothing** they wished to be involved in.
13% said they were **"too old"** to get involved, with those responses being from residents over the age of 55.
**"I feel like I am too old for all of that now."**
**"Been there, done that."**

**19%** of respondents mentioned a **lack of spare time** to get involved in local groups.
**"Being a carer limits my time and my energy."**

**16%** mentioned the barrier of **rising costs**.
**"I was doing Spanish lessons... I had to stop because of the increase in cost."**

**16%** of respondents spoke about a **lack of information** available to find out about local groups.
**"I would like to get to involved... but they're not advertised and I don't use social media."**
**"I think there are community things around, but they are hard to find."**

**13%** mentioned the barrier of **unreliable public transport**.
**"The buses are a joke, especially for someone that's disabled."**
**"The buses run on luck."**

**9%** of Gillingham locals spoken to mentioned that their **mental health** creates a barrier, which impacts on them being able to get involved.
**"I just can't get out sometimes, like if you have a bad day."**
**"It would put my anxiety through the roof."**

**9%** mentioned **safety** being a barrier.
**"In the evening, people don't feel safe to go out. Once my door is shut at night, that's it."**

**6%** of people mentioned **accessibility** as an barrier to getting involved.
**"There's a lot of places I can't get into with my wheelchair."**
**"I can't get out on my own because I suffer with seizures."**

# If you would like to chat with us about the report you can reach us through the following routes:

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Online:
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By Text:
Text us on 07525 861 639. By texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's British Sign Language interpreter will make contact

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